

146 Minimising risks to [urgently] safeguard the Aldabra World Heritage Site in Seychelles

CONCERNED that development is underway on Assumption Island [within the Aldabra Group], adjacent to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Aldabra Atoll, one of Earth's most intact and biodiverse ecosystems;

RECALLING that Aldabra Atoll, inscribed as a World Heritage Site (1982) and recognised as a Wetland of International Importance (2010), Key Biodiversity Area (2014), BirdLife Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (2001), Platinum-level Blue Park (2019), WWF Blue Corridor for Migratory Whales, Important Shark and Ray Area (2024), and WWF Global 200 Ecoregion, supports the world's largest giant tortoise population, vital green turtle nesting beaches and unique coral ecosystems;

RECOGNISING that Seychelles has its national legislation for the protection of its environment through the Environment Protection Act and legislation supporting national Environmental Impact Assessments;

ACKNOWLEDGING the Seychelles Island Foundation as the legal management custodian of the Aldabra Atoll World Heritage site and for its stewardship and scientific management of the ecosystem;

ACKNOWLEDGING the benefits brought by sustainable tourism development on islands allowing the restoration of their ecosystems as exemplified in the Seychelles;

[NOTING that the Seychelles Planning Authority issued a Stop Notice on 15 May 2025 for breaches of the Environmental Impact Assessment Act, including failure to meet biosecurity requirements, and that this order was reportedly disregarded allowing construction to continue;]

[DEEPLY CONCERNED by reported evidence of coastal dredging in a protected zone, habitat destruction, and the fatal injury of an Aldabra giant tortoise, and that local NGOs and civil society have faced intimidation and political targeting for opposing the project;]

[RECALLING that members and chairs of the IUCN Specialist Groups on Marine Turtles, Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles, Sirenia, Sharks, and Plants submitted formal letters opposing the Assumption Island development on scientific and conservation grounds;]

[ACKNOWLEDGING the leadership of Friends of Aldabra – a youth-led, Seychellois coalition made up of more than 30 international organisations – which has actively engaged with IUCN, UNESCO, the World Bank, the IMF and the Seychelles Government, filed a constitutional petition on 18 September 2025, and mobilised national and international advocacy for transparency, accountability, and rule of law;]

[RECALLING Decision 47 COM 7 of the World Heritage Committee (2025) requiring prior review of major interventions, and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (23 July 2025) affirming States' duty to prevent significant environmental harm; and]

[RECOGNISING The Assumption Pledge, put forward by Friends of Aldabra to the Government of Seychelles on 2 October 2025, calling for transparency, inclusion, and independent oversight to protect the [Aldabra Group], which was disregarded;]

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. ENCOURAGES the Government of Seychelles to:

[a. immediately suspend all construction on Assumption Island until an independently validated Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) - including pending review of new evidence and concerns (March – September 2025) of ecological harm and the Marine Spatial Plan signed into law in March 2025 – is completed with participation of Seychellois civil society, youth, scientists and affected communities;]

[b. submit all related project documentation including the Stop Notice of 15 May 2025 and other 2025 evidence to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and IUCN for review, in line with obligations under the World Heritage Convention;]

[c. work with IUCN and national experts to establish an oversight committee in support of the Government of Seychelles including independent representatives from Seychellois civil society (particularly youth) to ensure transparency & accountability in all future development on Assumption Island and Aldabra Atoll due to its relevance to a World Heritage property;]

2. REQUESTS the IUCN Director General and relevant Commissions, in coordination with UNESCO World Heritage Centre to provide technical assistance, capacity building, and financial resources to support Seychelles in implementing its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan;

[a. provide urgent technical assistance, assess threats and potential damage to Aldabra's Outstanding Universal Value which could include an independent expert mission to collect evidence and review construction activities on Assumption Island;

b. urgently review all submitted and collected information and new evidence received since January 2025, noting civil-society communications which have been submitted in September 2025; and

c. strengthen global procedures to ensure timely IUCN review of future developments adjacent to World Heritage properties; and]

[3. CALLS UPON all IUCN Members to:

a. support Seychelles and other Small Island Developing States facing climate and development pressures in strengthening transparent, science-based and inclusive decision-making, ensuring that World Heritage Sites and their buffer zones remain protected for all humanity; and

b. uphold global standards of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and meaningful community participation in environmental governance, in line with IUCN policy, human-rights obligations and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.]